United Nations A/64/PV.83

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

83rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 22 April 2010, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Earthquake in China

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Before proceeding to the items on the agenda, I would like, on behalf of the General Assembly, to extend our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of China for the tragic loss of life and damage that have resulted from the recent earthquake. I should also like to commend the effective response of the Government of the People's Republic of China in assisting the affected populations in the aftermath of this tragedy.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I have sent a message of support and solidarity, along with our prayers and thoughts, to the Government and people of China. This solemn gathering reiterates the outpouring of condolences and solidarity of the international community with China in its hour of grief.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of those who lost their lives.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

Agenda item 111 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Note by the Secretary-General (A/64/750)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): By its decision 59/420 of 27 May 2005, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, elected Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of five years beginning on 15 June 2005 and ending on 14 June 2010.

Members will recall that, by paragraph 9 of resolution 58/153 of 22 December 2003, the General Assembly decided to remove the temporal limitation on the continuation of the Office of the High Commissioner contained in its resolution 57/186 and to continue the Office until the refugee problem is solved.

In his note contained in document A/64/750, the Secretary-General proposes to the General Assembly that the term of office of Mr. Guterres be extended for a period of five years, beginning on 15 June 2010 and ending on 14 June 2015.

May I consider that the General Assembly decides to re-elect Mr. António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for a period of five years beginning on 15 June 2010 and ending on 14 June 2015?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like, on behalf of the Assembly, to congratulate Mr. Guterres on his re-election as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to commend the unanimous decision by the General Assembly to approve the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend the term of office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Guterres for a further five years. My delegation believes that this decision is both appropriate and timely. It is an important tribute by the international community to the excellent efforts of Mr. Guterres as High Commissioner over the past five years.

Mr. Guterres undertook commendable activities during his first five years as High Commissioner, in particular in raising awareness among the international community and urging it to provide the necessary assistance to those States that host our brothers, refugees from Iraq, who have been welcomed by Syria, Jordan and other Arab and non-Arab neighbours of Iraq.

While we commend Mr. Guterres and the senior officials of the Office of the High Commissioner, Syria of course looks forward to the day when our brothers from Iraq — who, as members are aware, number in the millions — will be able to return to their homeland in safety, after the conditions that compelled them to flee their homes are eliminated.

Once again, we welcome this decision and express our hope and certainty that Mr. Guterres will continue his fine work as High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Barton (United States of America): The United States wholeheartedly supports António Guterres for another five-year term as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We have been extremely impressed by his broad vision and collaboration in addressing the global humanitarian agenda and by his leadership and professionalism in the face of many complex humanitarian emergencies.

The High Commissioner's reform efforts — including needs-based budgeting, results-based management and human resources reform — show great promise. His strong advocacy for protecting and promoting human rights, as well as for peace and reconciliation, is known to all. His commitment to issues such as addressing critical gaps in the areas of malaria, anaemia, malnutrition, reproductive health and gender-based violence have allowed UNHCR to better incorporate those issues into its operational activities.

Finally, and perhaps most notably, High Commissioner Guterres has been an unwavering advocate on behalf of the millions of persons of concern to UNHCR, taking the time to meet with and listen to refugees, the internally displaced and other victims of conflict and upheaval to find better ways to bring protection and solutions to the world's most vulnerable – a cause shared by all and imbedded in the founding principles of the United Nations.

Mr. Mutahar (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Republic of Yemen, our congratulations to Mr. António Guterres upon the decision by the General Assembly to extend his mandate as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He has performed in a singularly excellent manner and has made a great contribution to enabling his Office to carry out its role as mandated by the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

Mr. Guterres has greatly assisted Yemen in drawing the attention of the international community to an issue that has become critical, namely, the presence of more than 700,000 Somali refugees in Yemen today.

I should like once again to congratulate Mr. Guterres.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): We have heard the last speaker on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 111?

It was so decided.

(d) Election of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

Note by the Secretary-General (A/64/749)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): By its decision 60/409 of 16 March 2006, the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, elected Mr. Achim Steiner as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term of office, beginning on 15 June 2006 and ending on 14 June 2010.

In accordance with section II, paragraph 2, of General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the Secretary-General wishes to nominate Mr. Steiner for re-election as Executive

Director of the Programme for a term of four years, beginning on 15 June 2010 and ending on 14 June 2014.

Accordingly, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to re-elect Mr. Achim Steiner as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme for a four-year term of office, beginning on 15 June 2010 and ending on 14 June 2014?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to congratulate Mr. Steiner on his re-election as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 111?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 53 (continued)

Sustainable development

Special meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of International Mother Earth Day

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with decision 64/556 of 15 April 2010, the General Assembly will now hold a special meeting on the occasion of the first anniversary of International Mother Earth Day.

Members will recall that, by resolution 63/278 of 22 April 2009, the General Assembly decided to designate 22 April as International Mother Earth Day and invited organizations of the United Nations system, international, regional and subregional organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations and relevant stakeholders to observe and raise awareness of the Day.

This is an occasion for global recognition of humans and nature as part of a system in which their harmonious relationship is essential to the continuation of life. We have recently witnessed devastating natural events throughout the world, from earthquakes to volcano eruptions, floods and droughts. In order to live in harmony with nature, we need to find solutions to today's environmental challenges and to restore the balance of nature.

Last month in the General Assembly, we celebrated World Water Day, during which Member States deliberated on the main challenges related to water for life. Along with water, we need to address such other issues as clean air and food security. In that regard, developed and developing countries have to come together and find ways to improve modes of production and the sustainability of natural resources.

From this forum, we can generate better awareness in the world on behalf of life in harmony with Mother Earth in order to ensure conditions for sustainable peace and development for present and future generations.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this plenary meeting — at the initiative of the Mission of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which we commend and thank — on the issue of living in harmony with nature. There is no doubt that this meeting will allow for a fruitful exchange among delegations in the General Assembly.

This first anniversary of International Mother Earth Day finds us still perplexed at the devastating effects of the earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, Indonesia and China and the rains and avalanches in Brazil. That chain of disasters leads us to reflect on our relationship with nature and to strike a balance in the way we approach. Health, the enjoyment of nature and respect for differences require us to concentrate immediately on improving the consumption and production patterns and parameters by which we live in order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

The international community regularly dedicates itself to revising those parameters and decides to commit to a number of global objectives and goals to that end. Unfortunately, the international community also regularly finds itself with unfulfilled objectives and goals, with a deep and continuous deterioration of natural resources and at an alarming distance from the ethical behaviour that should guide us in extending without delay the benefits of intellectual ingenuity and the wealth of a few to the entire international community.

In that regard, we understand that the high-level dialogue to undertake a mid-term review of the Millennium Development Goals, which will take place in September, along with the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, will be

opportunities not to be wasted to draw accurate conclusions on the situation we face and the model towards which we aim. They will also be opportunities to make concrete recommendations to produce successful policies at all levels.

I would now like to refer to sub-item (d) of agenda item 53, entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations". In so doing, I recall that article 3 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change enshrines a number of fundamental principles: the principle of equity, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the precautionary principle and the right to sustainable development and economic growth. Paragraph 1 of article 3 refers in particular to equity. That concept is an ideal that permeates our perception of what is fair and reasonable on the basis of the notion of the common good.

In the course of climate negotiations, many different notions of equity have been put forward. All entail the idea of future generations. In practice, these conceptual developments — those linked to actions or positions on emissions, assistance to vulnerable countries and the transfer of knowledge, financial and technological resources to developing countries — have led to the most conflicting aspects of the negotiations.

Under this approach, the international community has endeavoured to imprint on multilateral climate change instruments two central criteria: the criterion of differentiation, which rests on the principle of equity and has been willingly accepted by the international community, and the criterion of flexibility to enable the necessary adjustments in developed economies. Today, we feel that the criterion of differentiation and underlying equity has been diluted, while the flexibility criterion has grown out of all proportion, thereby weakening the principle of equity, which should drive not only the final result but also the process to reach a solid, legally binding, equitable and transparent agreement.

As our Minister for Foreign Affairs stated at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention, Argentina believes that the objective of moving towards a low-carbon society can be achieved only through a global commitment based on equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Our country is committed to the framework of multilateral, transparent and inclusive negotiations focused on the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol. As we understand it, developed countries have announced emission-reduction targets that are insufficient to achieve the goal agreed in the Bali Action Plan, thereby seeking to transfer to developing countries their enormous environmental debt and the obligations it entails. For all these reasons, we express our commitment to the work being done in the two ad hoc working groups.

It is time to revive dialogue and to find concrete solutions to the enormous environmental challenges facing humankind. Developed and developing countries alike face the challenge of jointly building a sustainable world for present and future generations.

In conclusion, in this constructive spirit, we urge the international community gathered here today to take committed and sincere steps to conserve and sustainably use nature in a way that will make possible a new pact between human beings and their environment that is based on solidarity and pragmatism and conducive to a healthy and full life in harmony with nature.

Mr. Oyarzun (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak today solely on behalf of my own country, Spain.

As a sponsor of resolution 63/278, by which the General Assembly designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day in 2009, and as a supporter of resolution 64/196, by which, in that same year, the Assembly decided to add to its agenda the sub-item "Harmony with nature", Spain welcomed that concept, interpreting it from the perspective of striking the necessary balance between human beings and their environment. Resolution 63/278 reflects further progress along the lines already covered by the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, emphasizing the need to promote harmony with nature and the Earth with a view to achieving a just balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

The concept of sustainable development promoted by the Rio Declaration places the human being at the centre of concerns associated with sustainable development. It also establishes that this right should be exercised in a way that responds to the

environmental needs of present and future generations. As a result, States should cooperate to preserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem.

The three pillars of that balance — social, economic and environmental — are today crucial elements of the sustainable development equation, which is essentially defined as the commitment between human beings and the socio-economic and environmental space in which it is carried out. Climate change poses a challenge to current development models, thereby weakening the environmental pillar, impairing the balance between human beings and nature, and consequently impeding the achievement of fully sustainable development in harmony with nature. All countries should therefore find ways of changing our growth patterns to low-carbon models that will make it possible for average global temperature increases not to exceed 2 degrees centigrade over pre-industrial levels.

However, climate change is also a catalytic factor in transforming a productive model that has shown itself to be excessively vulnerable into a new model that not only makes it possible to strengthen the bases for growth in the long term, but also lends itself to the emergence of new economic activities and the creation of job opportunities.

In the international process, we must work towards a multilateral solution that leads to a global transition towards a low-carbon economy that allows all countries to participate on the basis of their common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capacities, and allows them to benefit from all their efforts. We must work to strengthen the negotiation process in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, so as to achieve an ambitious and appropriate solution that takes into account the needs and concerns of all countries and bridges existing gaps.

I wish to conclude by recalling that 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity, during which the international community will discuss the short-term goals we have set in that area. Spain, which is home to one of Europe's greatest biodiversity endowments and is conscious of the key and determining role played by ecosystems in perpetuating life, hopes that the high-level debate on biodiversity to be held in the General Assembly in September will raise this issue to the highest level of political attention. We also hope that the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, which will take place in Nagoya, Japan, in October, will be a resounding success.

Mr. Carrión-Mena (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the delegation of Ecuador, I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting. I would also like to congratulate the Plurinational State of Bolivia on its initiative to call for this meeting.

Today we celebrate the first anniversary of International Mother Earth Day. Ecuador welcomes this celebration of the natural environment that surrounds human beings. We live on a planet whose habitat is unique in the universe, wherein living species reproduce as part of a genuine natural miracle in which everything — human beings, living creatures and the planet itself — is intimately interrelated. These close linkages are what we understand to be harmony with nature — in other words, with Mother Earth.

However, as we celebrate this natural paradise, Ecuador would like to draw attention to the grave threat it faces as a result of the fact that we are tampering dangerously with the balance between human beings and nature. Since the last century, human activity and the processes resulting from the patterns of consumptions of many countries have altered the self-regulating dynamics of the environment, which, unable to assimilate these transformations into its regular cycles, has produced changes with global repercussions.

The serious changes caused by human beings are today the greatest threats to the planet's stability. Global warming, the creation of millions of tons of waste, the destruction of forests and loss of biodiversity, the desertification of soils and extreme weather events are becoming increasingly acute. The planet is being swamped by excessive consumption, generating flagrant examples of mass waste, and without adequate recycling, all waste, whether organic, plastic or other, simply goes to the garbage dump. This noxious mix is a veritable fount of environmental pollution. As organic matter decomposes, methane gas, one of the chief pollutants on Earth, is emitted.

Every year, nearly 13 million hectares of tropical rain forest are destroyed globally, largely due to the

demand for wood as a raw material and the role the forest plays in sustaining communities, or to make way for grazing, cultivation and human settlements.

A vast diversity of insects, birds and animals are losing their habitats as a result. In the Amazonian region in Ecuador, for example, oil exploitation and illegal logging have caused monkeys, peccaries and other animals to seek refuge in remote areas and seriously endangered the survival of indigenous communities living in voluntary isolation, such as the Tagaeri and Taromenane.

Extreme climate events are occurring with increasing frequency. While some regions of the world are experiencing floods and intensive downpours on an unprecedented scale, others are dealing with severe drought. These unusual patterns adversely affected millions of individuals. It is estimated that 25 to 50 million individuals are displaced ever year as a result of climate-related disasters. By 2005, the total is estimated to have risen to 250 million.

As a result, Ecuador believes that the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is to take place in Cancún, Mexico, will provide us with a unique opportunity to agree on a legally binding convention.

For all these reasons, our study of Mother Earth — or nature — and its systemic relationship with human activity is a topic to which Ecuador attaches great importance. Therefore, in 2009, we sponsored resolution 64/196, entitled "Harmony with Nature", in the understanding that we would thus promote reflection and debate on proposals at the intergovernmental political level with a broad and comprehensive view of nature or Mother Earth. We believe that a holistic debate is relevant, as it will bring all human beings together in the thematic discussions on climate change, biodiversity, deforestation and the ozone layer, among others.

From this rostrum, I recall that Ecuador has made significant progress in these areas in our Constitution. Article 66 no. 26 guarantees the

> "right to live in a healthy environment that is ecologically balanced, free from pollution and in harmony with nature".

It also recognizes that "nature — or Pachamama — wherever life occurs and plays out, has the right to full respect" and that the State shall apply precautionary and restrictive measures concerning activities that could lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems or the permanent disturbance of natural cycles.

As one of its main objectives, Ecuador has set out to transform its energy supply network by achieving energy efficiency and diversifying our energy resources, with a focus on renewable energies with a low environmental impact. This transformation consolidates my country's positive contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation through mechanisms that promote carbon neutrality and initiatives that will be implemented for the conservation and restoration of Ecuador's natural resource base.

I would remiss if I did not recall that, in this context, Ecuador has also proposed the visionary Yasuní-ITT Initiative, whereby the oil in these oil fields will remain indefinitely underground. In so doing, we are prioritizing social and environmental values and seeking other ways to benefit from these resources, including economically. We have adopted a comprehensive approach, integrating the concept of sustainable development with those of preservation and respect for indigenous cultures that have lived in that region for thousands of years. This project reached a significant milestone yesterday, as negotiations with the United Nations Environmental Programme were concluded on the establishment of an international commission to channel international contributions to the Initiative.

My delegation supports the proposal made by Bolivia, and in this regard we believe that the concept of sustainable development must be complemented and enhanced from the perspective of humankind, future and present generations, nature and the socio-environmental system as a whole.

The report requested of the Secretary-General, which will draw on the contributions of Member States, will, I am sure, enable us to address a new topic that is undoubtedly complex, but that could lead us to develop a framework of reciprocal ethical values and principles for a life lived in harmony with nature or Mother Earth. This is vital. We must understand that all human beings, all living creatures and the environment of our planet are interconnected, and that, in this interdependence, all actions or omissions by some will

have repercussions for others throughout the world if we do not take the necessary precautions. These actions will have repercussions for future generations and all forms of life.

Mr. Fernández Moreno (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are gathered here today to celebrate a day that should be, for all of us who live on this planet, a day of pride and thankfulness for everything that Mother Earth has given us over the years. However, we come here today with a sense of concern and anguish, knowing that nature and all its living creatures, including human beings, are in grave danger of disappearing.

President Fidel Castro, in his speech to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, warned that:

> "An important biological species — humankind — is at risk of disappearing due to the rapid and progressive elimination of its natural habitat ...
>
> The solution cannot be to prevent the development of those who need it most ... If we want to save humanity from this self-destruction, wealth and available technologies must be distributed better throughout the planet. Less luxury and less waste in a few countries would mean less poverty and hunger in much of the world."

Cuba has for years been issuing warnings concerning the unsustainable nature of the absurd patterns of production and consumption that are generated by a social model based on market laws and result in conspicuous inequity in the distribution of resources. The world is struggling to overcome multiple crises, including the food, energy, environmental and water crises and the economic and financial crisis.

All of these highlight the need to transform the prevailing unjust international economic order, to eliminate all inequalities between rich and poor countries, to foster the political will in the developed world to provide the rest of the world with new and additional financial resources devoted to sustainable development, to create capacities and to eliminate the obvious gaps in preferential access to technology.

Every day, humankind witnesses the negative effects of climate change, which affect developing countries the most. Phenomena of catastrophic magnitude — such as earthquakes, droughts, tsunamis, the melting of glaciers, the rise in global temperatures, rising sea levels and others — have a devastating impact on our peoples, reflected in the increasing rates of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and preventable diseases.

Under the current world order, around 2.5 billion human beings live in poverty, 1.1 billion lack safe drinking water and 2.6 billion lack sanitation services. As a result, 800 million individuals are illiterate and over 115 million children lack access to primary education, while one third of those living with HIV/AIDS do not receive regular treatment. In Africa, to cite but one example, two out of every three patients lack any access whatsoever to antiretroviral drugs.

Apart from these alarming facts, which are part of everyday life on this planet, we would also recall that, while 1 billion people living in the first world waste around half of the energy resources of the planet, 2 billion poor people lack electricity. We could add that, while the developed world shirks its responsibility regarding mitigation, only 30 nations use 80 per cent of the fuel consumed on this planet, industrialized countries produce 76 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, and statistics indicate that such emissions increased by 12 per cent in those countries between 1990 and 2003.

The need for radical change in energy usage and for a realistic understanding of the urgent need to decrease consumption, particularly in the developed world, requires us to define, if we really wish to achieve them, such laudable goals as the Millennium Development Goals, which would appear to remain a fantasy rather than a tangible result of our species' will to survive.

We must encourage each other to reflect on and to become truly mindful of the importance of living in harmony with nature. If we do not find the right balance between humankind's present and future well-being, and if we do not develop the concept of sustainable development from our perspective as a species, we will end up destroying the potential for life on this planet with our own hands. Given the diversity of their cultures, customs and lifestyles, our peoples must survive in order to pass on everything they have learned to future generations and the collective memory of our Mother Earth.

We must fight to uphold the ethical and moral principles of respect for the environment, for peoples and for life. Nature has warned us and shown us its worst side. We have benefited from this and, along the way, learned to grow and to advance. Now humankind must find sufficient wisdom to preserve what we have and to prevent disasters brought about by our irresponsibility. Our actions should be guided by the conviction that a better world is possible and necessary to preserve Mother Earth as a place for nature and life for present and future generations.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde) (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to make this statement on behalf of the Group of African States, and my pleasure to address this Assembly on the occasion of the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day 2010.

The celebration of Mother Earth is recognition of the many environmental challenges facing the world. For us Africans, this is of particular significance because these challenges have taken on an undeniable scale down the years, as witnessed in the pernicious effects of climate change.

Our commemoration today is an important milestone. It provides us with an opportunity to think in depth about the state of Mother Earth, which has suffered irreversible environmental impacts and serious damage done to fragile ecosystems. We are called upon to think about the terrible harm that humankind is inflicting on the planet.

Today, we reiterate together our common determination to protect our rich environmental heritage, including through efforts to combat desertification and the loss of biodiversity. Such efforts contribute to rapid and sustainable development, in particular for our continent and its people.

The African landscape is very rich. The continent has extensive and diverse resources: forests, mountains, deserts and coastlines. It also has network of waterways that, if well-managed, would allow us to develop our agriculture, tourism, mining and oil production and to improve the land. Africa has 30 per cent of the world's mineral resources, including 40 per cent of its gold, 60 per cent of its cobalt and 90 per cent of its platinum.

In this regard, the African Group welcomes the efforts deployed at various levels by Member States — Government authorities, civil society and national institutions — together with our development partners to ensure the sustainable management of our environment. While we thank our friends for their perseverance and their heightened sense of duty, we urge them to persevere in the struggle to ensure that Africa's abundant environmental resources are used rationally and for the well-being of the inhabitants of our continent.

The African Group welcomes the outstanding efforts made throughout the continent to exploit, manage and protect our natural resources. Among such efforts, I would cite the joint initiative of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which seeks to double the continent's rice production by 2018; the Congo Basin Forest Partnership Initiative; the pan-African Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative; the initiatives of the Green Belt Movement; climate change training for African development and African control of the environment for sustainable development initiatives; as well as initiatives to combat drought and to reduce its impact in Africa, capacity-building for multilateral environmental agreements, the campaign to plant 1 billion trees, various programmes on water resources and so on. All these initiatives are clear expressions of a resolute political commitment to protecting the environment on the part of the continent's leaders, in particular through NEPAD's environmental programme.

Thus, I take this opportunity to appeal to Member States and development partners to pursue their efforts on behalf of the sustainable management of the environment in Africa. It is necessary not only to help the continent but, in so doing, to give the world and Mother Earth a better chance.

Africans have a special relationship to nature and a genuine understanding of nature in general and of the soil and biodiversity in particular. Their challenges are closely linked to the goals of the three Rio Conventions on climate change, biological diversity and desertification. Hence, the attention that we pay to the Earth requires us to strengthen our pleas and our actions, individually and as an organ of universal membership, in close cooperation with other intergovernmental bodies, organized civil society and additional stakeholders.

We believe that one of the best ways to commemorate this Day is to think about our current

activities that threaten the balance and very existence of Mother Earth. In our specific case, financial support put to good use will enable us to ensure that all activities linked to the sustainable management of the environment will be effectively carried out in Africa. We are convinced that, together, we can create a global dynamic for change and that we can utilize traditional knowledge and local experience to rectify the serious problems facing humankind today.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I wish to say one more thing. For millions of young Africans, poverty, drought, the lack of vision of some and today's prized practice of conducting laissez-faire, laissez-aller policies have provoked their irrevocable flight towards the mirages of forced emigration or artificial paradises, which makes them easy prey to organized crime and human traffickers. We must never believe that it is easy to leave the place of one's birth. The ties that we bind us to our soil are not symbolic or philosophical, but reflect the symbiosis between living beings and their natural habitat. What makes them leave is the lack of prospects and an unpredictable future. It is not only fear of the future, but also the will to survive whatever the dangers of a journey that often ends in a boat or a dugout shipwrecked at sea.

What makes them leave is climate change, which drains the nourishing soil, decimates herds or silts up water sources. How can one live without water? How can one live in an environment that provides neither food nor prospects? Immigration becomes the answer but, for many, is only an illusion. How can we curb emigration in such conditions? How can we keep people back, since those arms will build a future elsewhere? Is Africa doomed to watch its sons leave? Should we yield and give them up to the profitable networks of human trafficking? No. I think that, just as we managed to outlive slavery, overcome colonization, defeat apartheid and defy traditions and Powers to establish democracy, thanks to changes occurring in Africa and throughout the continent, we will be able to conquer fate and triumph over our own mistakes and our own blindness to make our continent, the cradle of humankind, the future of the world.

Mr. Solón (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank President Ali Treki for convening this special meeting of the General Assembly.

According to various scientific studies, the past 50 years have seen the most rapid changes in our species' relationship with the natural world in the history of humankind. Without realizing it, human activities are triggering sudden changes with serious consequences for the Earth's environment and its inhabitants. The effects of these changes are not restricted to climate change, but affect other areas.

Human activities are approaching or have already surpassed the scale of some of nature's greatest forces. Such human activity is taking place at a pace that exceeds the rate of Earth's standard variations over at least the past 420,000 years, of which there is a record thanks to the data obtained from the Vostok ice core. Given its scale, extent, incidence and simultaneity, in scientific terms such human activity has given rise to an unprecedented fluctuations in the dynamics and functioning of Planet Earth's natural system. In short, human activity has destroyed the natural balance.

This dialogue in the General Assembly is crucial in helping us begin to think about and seek measures to restore harmony with nature. In that regard, we wish to propose eight ideas to contribute to the Assembly's deliberations, which should open the way for the adoption of more tangible measures to ensure that such awareness is translated into action as a tribute to International Mother Earth Day, which we are celebrating today.

First, development has its limits. There cannot be endless development on a finite planet. That is unsustainable and impossible. The limit to development is created by the regenerative capacity of Earth's life cycles. When development starts to systematically destroy that balance, as we are now seeing with climate change, we must talk no longer about development, but rather about the deterioration and destruction of our Earth's systems.

Second, developed countries must reduce their consumption so as to restore harmony with nature. The ecological footprint of developed countries is three to five times greater than the average global ecological footprint that the planet can sustain without its life cycles being affected.

Third, the development of what we today call developing countries must follow models and paradigms different to those of developed countries so as to address the fundamental needs of their populations while preserving harmony with nature. The

divide between developed and developing countries must be overcome because the so-called developed countries are those that have caused the greatest imbalances with nature, and it is not sustainable or viable for all countries to follow that example without causing our system to collapse.

Fourth, it is not possible to achieve harmony with nature if there is no harmony and fairness among human beings. In a world where 1 per cent of the population owns 50 per cent of the planet's wealth, it is impossible to attain a balance with nature. To live in harmony with nature, we must first seek harmony among human beings.

Fifth, the search for harmony with nature in an integrated and interdependent system like that of planet Earth cannot be undertaken at the national level alone. A country's well-being is sustainable only if it contributes to the effective well-being of the entire world.

Sixth, we must develop indicators and monitoring mechanisms within the United Nations in order to ensure that national development policies and strategies take natural limits into account at the national and international levels.

Seventh, in an interdependent and interrelated system such as that of planet Earth, it is not possible to recognize only the rights of the human component of the system without having an impact on the system as a whole. In order to achieve harmony with nature, we must first clearly establish the obligations of humankind to nature and to recognize that nature also has rights that must be respected, promoted and upheld.

Eighth, it is not enough simply to perpetuate the status quo or to do nothing if we seek to avoid having an impact on nature. The lives of human beings will always have some impact on planet Earth. The challenge to humankind is to ensure that this impact does not disrupt the global balance to the detriment of the human individual. All human beings must understand that nature and its intrinsic rules of functioning include us too. All inhabitants of planet Earth share a common fate, no matter where we live. Whatever we do has an impact on Mother Earth and, in turn, on each other.

Ms. Williams (Grenada): I thank the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for calling for this special meeting.

Happy International Mother Earth Day! We are the Earth and the Earth is us.

Grenada was pleased to co-sponsor resolution 63/278, entitled "International Mother Earth Day", and resolution 64/196, entitled "Harmony with Nature".

Again, we congratulate the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia on its initiatives in these areas.

With a virtual environmental crisis on our hands, and deep poverty and inequality, we must respond differently to our environment. The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) therefore applauds the resumption of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, which we hope will lead to a legally binding outcome in Cancún, Mexico, in December 2010.

We call for increased support for adaptation to the damage already done to the islands in the global climate crisis. In this regard, we encourage the support of the launching of the adaptation fund in 2010. We call for effective support for mitigation. We call for expanded support for the development and transfer of technology, particularly as it relates to energy efficiency and renewable energy. We call for a vision, most of all — a common, shared vision that has at its core an ethical commitment to the survival of all the Earth and its people. Accordingly, AOSIS calls for containing average global temperature increases to well below 1.5 degrees centigrade, which is a position supported not only by AOSIS, but by a total of 103 United Nations Member States in their wisdom that overheating and overloading Mother Earth is unwise, insecure, unjust and unhealthy.

Grenada enjoys our place on the planet as a small archipelago of islands — Grenada, Carriacou, Petite Martinique, Calivigny Island, Ronde Island and many others — and we have our delimited portions of the stupendous Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. We consider ourselves blessed with sun, sea, wind and rain — when we do not have drought — which all together provide us with our food, our leisure, our pleasure and all that we get from being on this wonderful Mother Earth.

So we join with the rest of humanity and the nations of the Earth in celebrating today. Consistent with our national values, our Constitution and the resolutions I have just mentioned, Grenada continues to be a responsible citizen of the Earth, taking action at the local, national, regional and international levels.

This body may be more aware of the international rules. Grenada chairs the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technology Advice for the Convention on Biodiversity. The country also chairs a leading committee of the Montreal Protocol, and we chair the Alliance of Small Island Developing States — a group of the world's island States engaged in a struggle for survival, sustainability and development.

However, it is at the domestic level that we are equally busy and have been celebrating Earth Day for at least two decades. Yesterday, in preparation for the celebrations this year, our Government returned to the public in the form of a national consultation on the environment. Our organic farmers, our small fishermen and fisherwomen, and our scientists and technocrats all agreed that the national clean-up of our rivers and the planting of trees are important but are not sufficient, and called for the mainstreaming of environmental considerations in development planning, raising public awareness and improving our governance structure. They concluded, however, that all that small island States do on their own will not be sufficient. Therefore, in recognizing the continued vulnerability of the small island States, particularly to the adverse effects of climate change, the consultation called for increased mobilization, particularly of international cooperation in favour of our security and survival.

We pause to acknowledge all who have already engaged, directly and indirectly, in the creation of our collective happiness on this Earth.

In closing, the mother of a dear friend passed away this morning. Christian faith tells us that her soul returns to God, and we pray that she will rest in peace. But our lived experience tells us that to dust — to the Earth, that is — she will return. And so as we mourn the loss of her passing and all others who pass, we are reminded that we must take excellent care of the Earth, for we need to live in it, but equally we return to it in death.

We call for a reconsideration of the governance structures that leave us with vast chasms of inequality and unsustainability in the world, and we wish to all a happy International Earth Day.

Mr. Rajabi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for designating 22 April as International Mother Earth Day. I would like to express my gratitude to the Permanent Mission of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, which introduced resolutions 63/32, entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations", and 64/196, "Harmony with Nature", at the sixty-third and sixty-fourth sessions of the General Assembly, respectively, and paved the way for those initiatives.

International Mother Earth Day reminds us of the concern of billions of inhabitants of our planet who are at risk due to climate change. Climate change poses a serious threat to the existence of humankind and has the potential to create widespread poverty and socio-economic instability in all countries, regardless of whether they are developed or developing, though the threat is more severe to developing countries. Regrettably, there is a spectacular distance between commitments and actions on the part of the developed countries with regard to what is most urgent for the development of developing countries. Technology transfers and financial resources are two cornerstones of those commitments.

More than 10 years after the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol and its entry into force, the global community is still witnessing the lack of clear commitment to fighting the impact of climate change on the part of those countries that created this situation. Those who closely follow the ongoing climate change negotiating process can see the sense of disappointment among developing countries. As a matter of fact, the continuation of current trends leaves little room for optimism, and we should make every effort to have the main building blocks for a solid reliable and meaningful agreement at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 16) in Cancún, Mexico.

To pave the way for such an agreement, concerted and ambitious commitments and measures are required from the developed countries, based on the principles enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to address the needs of developing countries with regard to all four of the

major components of the Bali Action Plan: mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology. Those are the basic requirements for the success of COP 16. The post-Kyoto deal should preserve the right of developing countries to access to the appropriate technology, know-how and finance in order to enable them to protect their ecological and social economic security and to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and, in particular, the Goal of poverty eradication.

We are committed to the Convention and the Bali Action Plan, and will undertake further nationally appropriate mitigation actions, provided that those actions are enabled by capacity-building activities and supported by finance and technology from developed countries in a measurable, reportable and verifiable way, as specified in the Bali Action Plan.

The Copenhagen Accord was adopted by developed countries as a politically binding agreement so that they need not commit themselves to legally binding emissions reductions. We interpret this to mean that each country is free to submit its own national emissions-reduction target. Therefore, there are no long-term targets for emissions reductions. As a matter of fact, in Copenhagen the negotiating procedures were violated for the first time by the developed countries, and the majority of developing countries were left out of the negotiating process in the preparation of the Copenhagen Accord. We believe that such unusual procedures could jeopardize the decisions of international conventions in the future.

Since the Conference, we have neither adopted nor endorsed the Accord but have just taken note of it. We believe that a two-track process should be considered in the negotiations on climate change, and that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change must remain at the centre of those negotiations. In line with discussions at Copenhagen, the two-track negotiation process aligned under the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol should hold extra meetings in the run-up to COP 16. Negotiations must be conducted in a comprehensive, multinational and transparent manner and should lead to a legally binding agreement at COP 16.

Let me conclude by making the point that we have no choice but to relinquish political considerations and address many of the challenges of climate change that the world faces today. We have to work together now and engage in meaningful, fair and sincere cooperation to collectively fight the challenge of climate change.

Mr. Rosales Díaz (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome this historic International Mother Earth Day, which we are celebrating for the second time, and express our deep conviction that if we do not make the twenty-first century the century of the rights of our Mother Earth and if we do not all dedicate ourselves to the defence of Mother Earth, we will have no Mother Earth to leave to future generations.

The debate on this topic should lead the peoples and Governments of the world to commit themselves to working towards a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth, which should be adopted by this General Assembly in the near future.

There was a time in history when love and respect for nature, as well as peaceful and harmonious coexistence with nature, were the way of life of the men, women and children who lived on our Mother Earth. Mother Earth was at the centre of the universe. Then came the conquest and colonization, which called these communities and cultures "primitive" and "savage" and promoted the so-called civilization of the Western world with an economic system that was and remains based on unbridled development, the looting of the natural resources of our Mother Earth and of our oceans. In short, it was a struggle to the death in a quest to dominate and claim space on our Mother Earth and to force her to live in accordance with our profligate need for consumption and waste, rather than to live in harmony with her and to develop our communities in a sustainable way.

The unsustainable production and consumption patterns that this model has spread around the world have brought our Mother Earth to the brink of a collapse whose consequences for the survival of all will be disastrous unless we radically and urgently change course and model.

The shameful and failed Copenhagen Climate Change Conference taught us a valuable lesson in that it enables us to confirm the growing awareness among the peoples and many Governments of the world. However, it also confirmed, as if it were still necessary

to do so, that a small group of countries are still trying to maintain at all costs their economic hegemony to the detriment of the rights of our Mother Earth and the well-being of humankind. Nicaragua is certain that this selfishness will soon be overcome through the rising up of the peoples of the world who are awakening and holding this group of irresponsible leaders accountable for their actions against Mother Earth.

I am particularly proud to say in this Assembly that the first tangible roots of this awakening, this growing awareness, are to be found in Latin American and Caribbean countries, including members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). Commander Fidel Castro, the undeniable leader of the peoples of the world, has said that the prevailing economic and political system, with all of its implications has. to date, been humanity's chief problem. Commenting on an ALBA summit, he added that that summit was firmly tackling the serious problem of climate change. And he continued by saying that never before in human history had there been such a great threat as that of climate change. That was among the many thoughts of Commander Fidel on the phenomena that we are facing now and to which the representative of Cuba referred earlier.

I would like to take this opportunity to announce to the General Assembly that Nicaragua is the first country to accede to the Universal Declaration of the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity, whose text which has already been distributed to member. Nicaragua has acceded in order to forge a new model of interrelationship with Mother Earth based on the values of love, that deeply rooted feeling of our higher selves that leads us to love one another and to live in respect and peaceful coexistence with all species, and which causes us to join together in solidarity and compassion in order to restore, care for and protect our natural heritage. Our President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, has urged the Nicaraguan people to endorse this Universal Declaration of the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity with a view to its incorporation into the Constitution of our Republic.

This initiative, which is now the proud banner of the Nicaraguan nation, sprung from the mind and heart of Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, with the invaluable cooperation of the renowned theologian Leonardo Boff. The principle aim of the declaration is very simple, namely to recognize Earth itself as the supreme and universal common good and as our great mother, which has to be loved, cared for, regenerated and revered just as we revere our own mothers.

The declaration is based on following three essential factors. The first is life. In spite of pollution and environmental vulnerability, the Earth remains alive with its processes of natural regeneration which allow it to flourish. The second factor is the family living in community. We should not compete with one another; rather, we must complement and support one another, cooperate with each other, tolerate, accept, first ourselves and then others. The third fundamental factor is to cultivate and reshape this value and deep feeling of love for our Mother Earth.

This initiative has arisen in the current context, where there is an urgent need to reconnect with our ancestral cultures obliging us to care for and protect our Mother Earth. A year after committing ourselves to the rights of Mother Earth, it is time to launch a series of actions among all organizations of the United Nations system in order to translate into action resolution 63/278, of 22 April 2009, integrating a culture of love and respect for Mother Earth into every single programme and plan of action.

Similarly, the common good of Mother Earth and humanity requires that we conceive of the Earth as a living being worthy of dignity and not to be appropriated by any individual or to be commercialized or to be systematically afflicted by any production model. The planet belongs to the community of all who dwell on it, including those not yet born, and the entirety of our ecosystems.

The common good of Mother Earth and humanity requires that we protect and restore the integrity of ecosystems and pay particular attention to biological diversity and to all natural processes that sustain life.

The time has come to end the indifference, apathy and cruelty created by the prevailing system and its educational model. Now, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, 20,000 individuals of many nationalities have come together in order to agree upon, inter alia, a declaration of the rights of Mother Earth.

We call for a revolution of minds and hearts. Just as we accepted in the past that human beings must not be exploited, we must now accept and declare that all

life forms deserve respect and that nature exists for its own reasons. It was not created for — or by — human beings, and its value does not lie in the economic gains to be derived from it.

Let us not forget what President Evo Morales has said: that for her to live, Mother Earth does not need us; she existed before we did. But we need her.

I wish in conclusion to quote my President, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, who has indicated the path we must follow:

> "We are convinced that if peoples continue to vie with one another, nations must truly wish to rescue humankind, for if we fail to do so then we will all simply stand at the brink of the precipice. I say to those who think that the current market-based consumer model of development should continue, who think that humankind can afford to wait, that the peoples can afford to wait and that the peoples — and above all Mother Earth — will wait patiently while Mother Earth is saying to us, 'Enough, enough': The only way to defend ourselves is to unite as peoples. By defending Mother Earth, we defend humankind."

Mr. Cornado (Italy): As a sponsor of General Assembly resolution 63/278, which established International Mother Earth Day, Italy is honoured to take the floor on the occasion of the first annual celebration of that event. We see today's meeting as symbolizing the need for greater awareness of environmental protection and sustainable development processes, and we welcome the Earth Day celebrations that are taking place around the world today.

Our Latin culture has traditionally attached great importance to nature. That is why Italy believes it is crucial to address the issue of climate change, which is a key battle of our times. In the framework of the United Nations, and as a member of the European Union, Italy is working to achieve the global consensus needed to tackle the difficult task of mitigation and adaptation vis-à-vis the negative and irreversible effects of global warming.

Allow me once again to thank the Secretary-General for the leadership he has demonstrated on this issue: a quality that is essential for the success of the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Cancun.

Progress was made on climate at the Group of Eight summit at L'Aquila last year, which reaffirmed a fundamental concept: winning the climate change challenge will require a commitment from all the protagonists of the world economy, without exception.

Let me conclude by recalling the importance of the 2010 celebration of the International Year of Biodiversity. The High-level Event to be held in September will help increase the understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth and will highlight the action that we can take to slow down loss of biological diversity.

Mr. Escalona Ojeda (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today, as we celebrate the first anniversary of International Mother Earth Day, I express my gratitude to the brother Plurinational State of Bolivia for this initiative. A year ago, the General Assembly, by its resolution 63/278, proclaimed 22 April as International Mother Earth Day. Today, we not only celebrate it but also acknowledge that with the adoption of that resolution the United Nations launched a great debate on an issue with which humankind has been grappling for decades and which without doubt will be the hallmark of the twenty-first century, a century that should usher in a new civilization. That resolution, along with the proposal to recognize the rights of Mother Earth, mark a break with the world vision that was the foundation of Western civilization.

We are moving from a world at whose centre were all living beings — all of creation — to an anthropocentric world whose focus is man and which not merely ignores women but views all other beings as mere objects that exist only at the behest of men. We are moving away from nature as the source of life — and life itself — to nature as a commodity, as a raw material, as a natural resource. We are moving from a human being who is the sum of the soul, the mind, the body and nature to a creature who is a human resource: merchandise. We are moving from collective property on the Earth to the dominance of private property; from a world of humankind to the dominion of the individual, individualism and selfishness; from a market characterized by interpersonal relations and fair trade to a market dominated by dog-eat-dog warlike competition, by inter-object relations ruled by selfishness, individualism and utilitarianism. We are

moving from God the creator of beauty, music, birds and human beings as extensions of their creator to a commercialized God degraded to the level of human convenience.

The culmination of this process is neoliberal globalization, which seeks to inject the law of the market into every cranny of society, culture, the collective imagination, knowledge, customs and values, thus destroying all that is spiritual and ethical and that is marked by altruism and solidarity. The result has been violence, war, loneliness, drug abuse, depression, murder, suicide, slavery, trafficking in persons and, in particular, the destruction of ecosystems.

In order to justify, perpetuate and defend this form of human survival, a legal and institutional superstructure is being buttressed. Its purpose is to consecrate private property, individualism, machismo and anthropocentrism: the exploitation of the majority by a minority of property-owners and those who benefit from the spiritual and material poverty of humankind.

Naturally, it is impossible within this legal paradigm to imagine that nature — Mother Earth — could have any rights. But she does indeed have the right to be seen as a living being: the source of life and the everlasting generator of life. She has the right not to be scourged with toxic agrochemicals, and to see that her water, air and forests are not contaminated and that the rights and privileges of living beings are respected, each in their own way. She has the right to an international criminal judicial body to try crimes against Mother Earth and the destruction of ecosystems.

This is essential because modern individuals and international corporations have resorted to acts of homicide, genocide, ethnocide and genocide, committed serious crimes that violate the human and planetary ecologies, and are responsible for desertification, droughts, floods, the melting of the polar ice caps and glaciers, the sinking of island States and other vulnerable regions, epidemics, the increased fury of hurricanes, food crises, famine, economic crises, the destruction of the fertility of our soils and biodiversity, and, most emblematically, global warming. This is the triumph of violence and the culture of death.

The tasks of Mother Earth — the creation of oxygen, water, fertile land, fruit and various materials — are enshrined in the laws of the universe and the production of life. Her ability to perform these tasks has been hampered by the production systems implemented by capitalist society, resulting in the loss of productivity of global ecosystems.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its solidarity with the World People's Summit taking place in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and trusts that its outcome will pave the way for the struggle against global warming and the salvation of the planet.

Mr. Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank President Ali Treki, and in particular the Plurinational Republic of Bolivia, for calling this special meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate International Mother Earth Day.

The effective protection of our environment is perhaps the most dramatic challenge facing the international community today. The preservation of our environment is a collective responsibility that should be integrated into our national and international agendas, bearing in mind the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities. We must be mindful that, without an adequate environment, any effort towards development will have but limited effect.

When we talk of the environment, we are talking of the well-being of our citizens; we are talking of the everyday lives of millions of people who are affected directly or indirectly by the adverse effects of climate change; we are talking about our economy and our production; and we are talking about our future. It is essential that we renew our political commitment and design constructive strategies that respond to the needs of our peoples and comply with our international commitments.

The upcoming Climate Change Conference, the start of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the summit to review the Millennium Development Goals, and the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development will afford us unique opportunities to work constructively on the basis of specific measures to address key topics on the environmental agenda and to reaffirm once again the three fundamental pillars of sustainable development.

The magnitude of the problem requires clear statements, firm agreements and concrete action. We hope that we will be able to rise to the challenge.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our shared need and responsibility to strike the right balance between the development of our peoples through sustainable economic growth and respect for the Earth as a source of life have created a situation where action is urgent. We therefore recognize the importance of the concept of harmony necessary both to the well-being of humankind and to nature. It would be utopian to hope for human well-being and development if we destroy our Mother Earth.

In this regard, we believe in the urgency of the quest for rational productive development based on the good management of the Earth's resources. With a view to the upcoming summit to review the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September here in New York, we must focus our efforts on ensuring that we are also able to meet the Goal pertaining to environmental sustainability. For Paraguay, the concept of sustainable development comprises an integrated and systemic process aimed at improving the quality of life of human beings with an integrated productive system, development accompanied by social justice and civic participation. In this spirit, we support the idea of improving the quality of life of our citizens without jeopardizing our capacity to meet the needs of future generations.

The road to reducing hunger and poverty is intrinsically linked to the good management of environmental resources. We cannot afford to put off measures to improve the environment to a time when growth leads to a reduction in poverty, as that would minimize the importance of environmental goods and services as a source of subsistence and well-being for our populations, as well as the extent to which such goods and services are prioritized in order to enhance the possibility of emerging from poverty.

Finally, it is our firm belief that environmental deterioration is neither irreversible nor the inevitable consequence of economic growth. Therefore, we are of the view that respect for Mother Earth is a form of respect for our fellow humans, as it is the source of life that will allow us to live in a world with less hunger and greater well-being.

Mr. Okuda (Japan): Let me express my appreciation for the convening of this special meeting on the occasion of the International Mother Earth Day. According to the Japanese non-governmental organization Earth Day Japan, 36 events have been organized today all over Japan to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Earth Day. International Mother Earth Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the need for environmental protection throughout the communities. Global warming and the loss of biodiversity are among the myriad major challenges facing us.

This meeting is a very good occasion for us to deepen our understanding of our common but differentiated responsibilities to protect the planet for our future generations. The challenges before us are so enormous that immediate actions are required on the part of international community, particularly in the field of climate change. We should move forward the negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Copenhagen Accord was an important first step towards a binding international agreement to establish a fair and effective framework on climate change. I would like to emphasize the significance of that Accord, which includes, inter alia, mitigation actions by all countries and enhanced funding. Already, 119 countries have associated themselves with the Accord. Broad support for the Accord will contribute to enhancing the negotiation process.

The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicted that 30 per cent of our planet's species would be at an increasing risk of extinction if the current global warming trend continued. Therefore, the protection of biodiversity is an urgent challenge for us as well as for future generations of mankind. This year's International Year of Biodiversity provides us with a good opportunity to strengthen our efforts to reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss. In that regard, I hope that the High-level Meeting on biodiversity, to be held on 22 September, will contribute to creating political momentum for mainstreaming the protection of biodiversity.

In October, Japan will host the tenth Conference of the Parties (COP 10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the city of Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture. We will continue with the preparation process in close cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure a successful COP 10.

We are fully committed to making our contribution so that ambitious, realistic and action-oriented post-2010 biodiversity targets can be established.

I would like to conclude my remarks by introducing the Japanese proposal for the long-term target: "Enhancing the harmony between human beings and nature all around the world to improve the state of biodiversity from the current level as well as to sustainably increase the benefits of ecosystem services".

Mr. Wang Qun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like at the outset, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to thank the President of the General Assembly and all Member States for their sincere expressions of condolence and support regarding the earthquake that struck Yushu, Qinghai Province, in China. We are particularly grateful to the President for the message of sympathy he sent to the Government of China at the earliest possible moment. Under the strong leadership of the Chinese Government, we, the Chinese people, have united as one and are working hard to overcome the effects of the disaster and rebuild our homes.

The Earth provides a home for the survival and development of human beings and all other living things. At its sixty-third session, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 63/278, designating April 22 as International Mother Earth Day. Today, we gather here to celebrate that Day, which is of great significance to promoting the harmony between humankind and the Earth.

China is now in the process of industrialization and modernization. It is faced with a multitude of pressures in terms of population, resources and environment as it strives to achieve sustainable social and economic development. The Chinese Government places great emphasis on protection of the ecosystem and the issue of resources and the environment. We foster a scientific approach to development that puts people first and promotes comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development. We make conservation of resources and protection of the environment our basic State policy. We put the development of a resource-efficient and environment-friendly society high on the agenda of China's industrialization and modernization strategy, and we strive to achieve a win-win outcome: both socio-economic development and environmental protection.

Since the 1980s, the Chinese Government has celebrated Earth Day every year with different themes and various activities to improve public awareness of the importance of environmental protection. The Earth Day theme for this year is "Cherishing the Earth's resources, transforming the mode of development and living a low-carbon lifestyle". It aims to utilize the platform of Earth Day celebrations to make people more conscious of China's resource shortages, disseminate relevant scientific and technological knowledge and bring the entire society on board to conserve resources, reduce carbon emissions and transform the mode of economic development.

Humankind has only one Earth, and the Earth is our shared homeland. We are willing to join hands with all people who care about the destiny of humankind, raise our awareness, respect the law of nature and make every effort from now on to better protect and treat the Earth. Let us make greater efforts to conserve resources, protect the environment, achieve harmony between human beings and nature and work together to create a better future for humankind.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): Brazil thanks the President of the General Assembly for this opportunity to discuss the important issues that the celebration of International Mother Earth Day evokes. Brazil congratulates the Plurinational State of Bolivia on the initiative of establishing International Mother Earth Day.

The Earth and its ecosystems are our home, and, in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature and the Earth. The concept conveyed by the expression "Mother Earth" is embedded in many cultures, stressing the systemic interdependence of all living things.

I did not draft those two simple but truthful sentences. The ideas behind them are, in fact, contained in the preambular part of resolution 63/278, which designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day. The successful negotiation of that resolution, of which Brazil was a proud sponsor, should be credited to the constructive driving force of Bolivia. As called for by the General Assembly, we should make use of this International Day to promote activities and exchange options, views and experiences for a life in harmony with nature.

Brazil understands International Mother Earth Day as an opportunity to call attention to the environment in the context of sustainable development and its fundamental bearing on the well-being of humankind. The protection and sustainable use of the environment cannot be dissociated from the fulfilment of the aspirations of all peoples to economic development and social progress. By focusing in an integrated manner on the economic, social and environmental aspects, the paradigm of sustainable development offers the key to integrating efforts for the eradication of poverty and the improvement of livelihoods, while protecting the planet's environment.

The past 40 years have witnessed great advances in establishing principles, norms and activities for the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development in many areas. However, implementation of those agreements is still lagging behind.

The international community requires a strong political message that sustainable development continues to demand the highest attention and that our implementation efforts should be redoubled. International Mother Earth Day provides an important opportunity to deliver such a message in the lead-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2012. Brazil expects the Conference to renew political commitment to sustainable development at all levels, engaging Governments and stakeholders around an international cooperative effort to implement the promises of sustainable development. It is our hope that the Conference will provide the missing link to future international and national actions in support of sustainable development, anchored in the principles established in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, including the principle of intergenerational equity.

Since 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, allow me to briefly address that subject. Our efforts must be redoubled to ensure that the resources of biological diversity are protected and used sustainably. It is critical that the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity be implemented in a balanced and effective manner. The adoption of a protocol on access and benefit-sharing at the next Conference of the Parties to that Convention, to be held in Nagoya, is also crucial.

The Assembly may be assured of Brazil's commitment to those tasks.

Mr. Gutiérrez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to convey the greetings of the Peruvian people and Government to the participants in this meeting and our appreciation for its having been convened. That is further proof of the determination of the United Nations and the Governments represented here to work towards a future where, as stated in resolution 64/196, adopted by the Assembly in December, humanity can and should live in harmony with nature.

We are convinced that, as resolution 63/278, adopted by the Assembly in April 2009, points out, that in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature and the Earth.

From our standpoint as regards our work as Members of the United Nations, an Organization that deserves our full support and for which we continue to work tirelessly, and at the particular juncture in which we happen to live, this respect and quest for harmony are closely linked to seeking a solution to the thorny problem of global warming. This ought to be addressed specifically in the ongoing negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In that regard, Peru hopes to reach a comprehensive, ambitious, binding and effective agreement on climate change. The negotiations to that end should be proactive and geared towards seeking a consensus within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, with the participation of all actors, including civil society. The agreement should include an ambitious and binding commitment by the developed countries to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and should not impose obligations or conditionalities on developing countries. Such a binding commitment by developed countries should include financing in line with national adaptation needs and mitigation proposals.

A study carried out by the Central Reserve Bank of Peru in 2009, in the context of a scenario including a temperature increase of 2 Celsius degrees and a 20 per cent change in precipitation by the year 2050, established that in 2030, the gross domestic product

(GDP) of Peru would be between 5.7 and 6.8 per cent less than the GDP that would be attained without climate change. In 2050, such losses would exceed 20 per cent with respect to potential GDP.

That reality and the fact that my country, like so many other highly vulnerable middle-income countries, mean that Peru is fully committed to the effort that we must make to reach such an agreement. We hope that the next Conference of the Parties (COP), to take place in Cancún, Mexico, will enable us to make substantive progress in that area. In that endeavour, we believe that the agreement should include a bold and voluntary mitigation proposal by developed countries, geared towards achieving, as a whole, reductions of 30 per cent compared with the so-called business-as-usual model, and of 40 per cent by 2050, by implementing a low greenhouse gas emission model.

As a highly vulnerable country, Peru supports a comprehensive, ambitious and effective mitigation effort, led by developed countries, with the active participation of developing countries. Here, we have already demonstrated our proactivity. It is worth recalling that at COP 14, my country expressed the will to achieve a zero net deforestation rate in 10 years, thus contributing to global mitigation efforts.

We believe that international cooperation should play a central role in the initial cost of that effort, approximately $347 million annually. In that regard, looking to the future, we hope that all developed countries will commit themselves to similar ambitious targets, that the cooperation mechanisms and agreements established to that end will not transfer their costs to the developing countries, and that developing countries will have the will to contribute to the increasingly ambitious global mitigation effort.

We reiterate our commitment to working for the success of the Mexico Conference and of future negotiations on climate change, given our desire to promote economic development in harmony with Mother Earth.

Mr. Jaber (Lebanon): At the outset, Lebanon joins other delegations in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and in underlining the importance of Assembly resolutions pertaining to International Mother Earth Day.

Forty years after the first Earth Day, the world is in greater peril than ever before. While climate change is the greatest challenge of our time, it also presents an unprecedented opportunity to work together and build a healthy, prosperous, clean global economy for us all and for our future generations. Achieving sustainable development will remain an important and a pressing task for all countries of the world as they strive to promote economic growth, achieve higher living standards for their populace and protect the environment and biodiversity.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the climate change summits ushered in an era when some Member States endeavoured to balance their respective economic development policies and plans with factors that included, inter alia, population needs, resource endowment and environmental preservation. Nonetheless, that era was preceded by economic development plans on the part of the developed countries that have led to irreversible environmental and ecological degradation and adverse climate change, the consequences of which are witnessed and borne worldwide.

Along with other countries, Lebanon co-sponsored resolutions 63/278 and 64/196. It is hoped that those resolutions will bring about the needed change, help raise global awareness of International Mother Earth Day, set the impetus to reverse the global environmental degradation and preserve Mother Earth for generations to come. That change requires the efforts of the developing countries and the vigorous and genuine engagement of the developed countries, in the spirit of international cooperation and sustained partnership at all levels.

At the level of the United Nations, various bodies have a role to play, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, an essential body within the United Nations system mandated to carry out integrated deliberations on economic, social and environmental issues. It should be expanded to include planning and disseminating better policy guidance and more awareness programmes to help Member States achieve their sustainable economic development goals and environmental and biodiversity protection.

At the international level, the developed countries themselves need to fulfil their international commitments, including, inter alia, providing the developing countries with the innovative financing funds, know-how and environment-friendly

technologies to enhance their capacity to achieve their respective development objectives while protecting the environment.

At the national level, Governments should formulate their sustainable development strategies according to their respective needs and introduce the social, legislative and administrative measures necessary to achieving those strategies, while taking into account environmental protection measures and harmony with nature.

At the domestic level, the Lebanese Government attaches great importance to achieving sustainable economic development and at the same time raising environmental awareness. In that context, the Ministry of Environment of Lebanon put forward a comprehensive, people-centred programme of work for the years 2010 to 2012, which is geared towards achieving a set of objectives, including, among other things, improving public and special group awareness of environmental issues and promoting a resource-saving and environmentally friendly society. Those awareness programmes are disseminated at the school, academic, non-governmental organization and social levels. They are also aimed at strengthening environmental inspection and enforcement; endeavouring to achieve the sustainable management of land, air and soil resources; preserving and promoting Lebanon's ecosystem capital and energy efficiency; and promoting environmentally friendly products and eco-job opportunities. The realization of those goals will benefit the Lebanese people and certainly contribute to the world's sustainable development.

In closing, our sustained partnership and collective efforts at these levels can make Earth Day 2010 a turning point to advance climate policy, energy efficiency, renewable energy and green jobs.

Mr. Kohona (Sri Lanka): At the outset, let me extend my thanks to the President for convening this special meeting to commemorate International Mother Earth Day. I take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Bolivia for spearheading action on resolutions 63/278 and 64/196. As a sponsor of the latter, my delegation attaches particular importance to this special meeting today.

To the best of our knowledge, planet Earth is the only place in the universe where human life exists. While it possesses a unique identity among living beings, humankind is nevertheless an inseparable part of Mother Earth. We humans have for centuries made considerable modifications to the natural character of this planet, but in the most recent centuries our impact has been negative through unsustainable and predatory activity that has resulted in a colossal increase of burdensome anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, the destruction of ecosystems and the depletion of the Earth's biodiversity. The consequences of those activities are yet to unfold fully, but current knowledge on climate change is adequate to anticipate disturbing future results. We have to accept that living in harmony with nature is not only a fundamental but also an existential matter for all living beings.

We have collectively recognized the importance of addressing that complex issue through multilateral action. The Rio Declaration of 1992 acknowledged the integral and interdependent nature of Earth, our home, while Agenda 21 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002 further consolidated our shared commitments.

We now see the immediate challenges. The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concludes that climate change poses an unequivocal challenge to human development and even to humankind's existence. Climate change will have an impact on all countries, in particular developing ones. The adverse impacts on developing countries will have far-reaching consequences for all people. The commemoration of International Mother Earth Day is therefore timely and relevant as we seek to mitigate such possible outcomes, particularly through a legally binding agreement.

My own country, Sri Lanka, faces enormous challenges in sustaining its development efforts, while confronting environmental depletion and climate change. As a strategy to face such new realities, President Mahinda Rajapaksa has provided the leadership for a decade-long sustainable development initiative, the Green Lanka Programme, from this year to the year 2020. This intervention includes coherent activities to protect our water resources and catchment areas, protect the oceans and aquatic resources, prevent air pollution, encourage soil conservation, introduce innovative new methods for agriculture, promote renewable energy resources, promote eco-friendly industries, build healthy towns and housing schemes, develop an environmentally friendly transport system,

implement waste management systems, prepare the country for environmental change and promote cultural awareness and education.

At the regional level, the leaders of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2008, by acknowledging the value of living in harmony with Mother Earth, emphasized the need for restoring harmony with nature, drawing on ancient South Asian cultural values and traditions of environmental responsibility and sustainability. We have inherited a rich tradition of living in harmony with the environment, which goes back thousands of years. In furtherance of this regional dialogue, we have adopted climate change as the key theme for the forthcoming sixteenth SAARC Summit to be held in Thimpu, Bhutan, this year. In fact, climate change has become even more relevant in the context of the increasingly severe threats in the region — from sea-level rise, deforestation, forest degradation, soil erosion, loss of crop diversity and productivity, siltation, droughts, storms, cyclones, unseasonal rains, floods, glacier melt and the resulting glacier lake outburst, and urban pollution. The possibility of environmental refugees looms large.

Our united action, therefore, will be essential to ensure the protection of Mother Earth for future generations. We recall Mahatma Gandhi's profound observation that the Earth has enough to satisfy all our needs, but not our greed. The celebration of International Mother Earth Day will further encourage our moral and legal commitment to respect nature and ensure environmental sustainability.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus welcomes the fact that international efforts to protect the environment involve all stakeholders interested in preserving our environmental legacy and a healthy habitat for future generations. These include Governments, non-governmental organizations and the vulnerable category of indigenous peoples. Protecting nature from predatory use and from the consequences of man-made and natural disasters requires greater coordination on behalf of the international community. That is precisely why the Republic of Belarus was among the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 63/278, on International Mother Earth Day. We highly appreciate the efforts of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to ensure that environmental themes are high on our agenda.

The people of Belarus have developed a careful and protective attitude towards nature over centuries. One illustration of this is that as long as 600 years ago we in Belarus established a protected area in the forest of Belovezhskaya Pushcha, which is on UNESCO's World Heritage List. We constantly contribute to work on all sustainable development issues, including countering climate change, at both the international and national levels.

Environmental protection and the prudent use of natural resources have been a traditional focus for my Government. Environmental issues were in the spotlight when in 2009 we held our national Year of Native Land. Activities in that Year were in two interlinked areas: practical activities on rehabilitation; and environmental training and dissemination of information to the population at large and, in particular, to young people. Practical initiatives arising from the Year of Native Land included: planting or restoring forests; developing tourism infrastructure, including waste treatment, leading to a 58 per cent increase in communal waste collection; an international exhibition on images of the motherland in the visual arts; and an international environmental cinema and television forum on environmental safety. All these initiatives increased our people's level of environmental awareness.

The fact that we held all of these activities within the framework of the Year of Native Land does not mean that we stopped there. The Government of the Republic of Belarus has devised a model programme of activities under which our environmental rehabilitation activities will continue in 2010 and thereafter.

For Belarus, environmental protection and rehabilitation became particularly important after the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster. Even 24 years after that disaster, thousands upon thousands of our people are feeling its consequences. A priority for us today is to create conditions that can foster the sustainable development of victims of the disaster. To that end, we have consistently acted to protect our people from radiation and to guarantee the production of clean goods in affected areas.

We are paying particular attention to introducing energy technologies consistent with the need to protect people in affected areas from radiation. This is because burning locally available fuel is dangerous from the standpoint of radiation protection. We have been

working to supply these areas with gas, but we realize that we need to introduce technologies based on renewable energy sources. Resolving the issue of renewable energy sources could be helped by a discussion within the United Nations of the issue of making use of renewable energy sources to supply energy to Member States.

Careful use of resources in all our everyday activities can be a gauge of our success in attaining the Millennium Development Goals. Belarus is contributing to the defence and protection of the future of Mother Earth, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, for convening this special meeting on International Mother Earth Day. My thanks go also to the delegation of Bolivia for its leadership on this issue.

All of our planet's natural resources are closely interlinked and constitute a single whole. Therefore, any changes in our environment could affect the state of all natural resources — and of our lives.

One of the variable, limited and vitally important resources for humankind is water. Water is the source of life on this planet, and the state of our water resources affects all of our natural, social and economic systems. Global changes — such as population growth, urbanization, changes in land use and global warming — are putting increasing pressure on that limited resource.

Water resources are the main vector through which global climate change influences Earth's ecosystems and thus the lives and well-being of peoples. Tajikistan, as an initiator of the International Year of Freshwater and the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015, is interested in the successful implementation of the International Decade, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) concerning drinking water and basic sanitation, and other water initiatives within the United Nations.

I note that this has been an important year for the implementation of the MDGs and the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life". Under resolution 64/198, this year we are conducting a comprehensive mid-term review of the implementation of the International Decade for Action. This process was begun on 22 March when the President of the General Assembly convened the high-level interactive dialogue. The broad participation of representatives of Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, as well as their statements and discussions, demonstrated once again the importance of a common universal approach to the issues of water use and water resource preservation, and of water resources to the sustainable development of countries, regions and the world community as a whole.

The dialogue also contributed to the preparations for the High-Level International Conference on the Mid-term Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," 2005-2015, to be held in Dushanbe, the capital of my country, on 8 to 10 June. My Government has already sent invitations to the Governments of all Member States, leading international organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders to participate in the International Conference. We are convinced that the Conference will be an opportunity for participants to discuss water issues comprehensively, assess water supplies in countries and regions, underscore the main challenges in water supply and sanitation, develop future joint strategies for the successful implementation of the second half of the International Decade, and better pursue the water agenda in general.

I take this opportunity once again to invite Member States to participate actively in the International Conference in Dushanbe. Furthermore, we intend to convey the conclusions and recommendations of that and other international water forums to the MDG review summit to take place in New York in September.

Given the topical nature of the water issue, I am convinced that, together with all other Mother Earth issues, it will continue to be considered a priority on the agenda of the United Nations.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the decision of the President of the General Assembly, at the initiative of delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, to hold this special meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the International Mother Earth Day, in accordance with resolution 63/278. El Salvador attaches great importance to this celebration, in particular at a time when humanity is facing the

ultimate challenge of survival — not only of our species, but of the whole planet.

It is of fundamental importance that all Member States fulfil without delay the political commitments they undertook in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation if we are to make progress towards achieving this goal. Furthermore, the urgent need to achieve significant progress and binding commitments in the fight against climate change has become a priority for all our peoples with a view to the preparations for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Cancún, Mexico.

Climate change is already causing considerable damage in many countries, especially developing countries, and millions of poor persons and vulnerable groups in these countries are suffering the consequences. The world's most advanced research centres agree in their predictions that very little time remains to avoid an irreversible catastrophe. Humanity finds itself obliged once again to place its hopes in the ongoing negotiations in the run-up to Mexico. This time, we cannot allow another failure.

Our heads of State and Government have recognized that responding to the threat of climate change is a long-term battle to safeguard economic growth and eradicate poverty in a sustainable way. Therefore, promoting climate and environmental protection policies amid the worst global financial and economic crisis represents action of enormous political and strategic value.

As various speakers have pointed out, fighting climate change and pursuing sustainable development, in particular its dimension of environmentally sustainable growth, are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, with a view to the future, sustainable development will be the only way to ensure the prosperity and sustainability of our peoples.

El Salvador recognizes that the promotion of sustainable development and the struggle against climate change are essential but insufficient. We must also achieve agreements and forge consensus on other topics of equal importance, such as the ongoing rise in demand for energy; energy security; the volatility of oil prices, which have a negative impact on the economies of countries such as El Salvador, which depend entirely on imports of such commodities; and the unsustainable use and unbridled exploitation of natural resources, including water, biological diversity and raw materials.

All of these issues pose significant challenges that we must tackle at the global, regional, national and local levels. Key to doing so, without a doubt, is the promotion of inclusive, transparent and participatory strategies and policies and the strengthening, inter alia, of public and private partnerships at all levels.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm the commitment and political resolve of the Government of El Salvador to contribute, on the basis of our particular circumstances, to addressing these challenges, to ensuring the survival of our species, and restoring balance on Mother Earth.

Mrs. Wahab (Indonesia): The finite nature of our planet dictates that indiscriminate growth in the use of materials and natural resources will eventually lead to an ecological disaster. At the same time, economic growth in our global society is necessary to reducing inequalities in income, quality of life and human development, as well as poverty and deprivation.

Our presence here on the occasion of the International Mother Earth Day underscores the importance we attach to achieving sustainable development and, more profoundly, preserving the Earth. To strive to achieve sustainable development is a selfless goal, balancing the fulfilment of today's development needs with the needs of future generations and with the responsibility to protect our planet.

Through the resourcefulness of the multilateral system, we have been able to fashion tools and frameworks to manage the pace of economic development in such a way as to minimize negative impacts on the environment. While we still need to strive to reach the desired balance, we have also seen positive advancements. Owing to the adoption of those strategies and measures, prior to the recent global crisis, we experienced a decade of global economic growth and a consistent reduction in global poverty.

We can also highlight some positive developments on the environment. The use of chlorofluorocarbons has been reduced by over 99 per cent in developed countries and by over 50 per cent in developing countries. However, emerging environmental challenges continue to seriously test the resourcefulness of the global community. Those

challenges represent a clear and present danger to development processes. We must therefore intensify our spirit of multilateralism in order to expedite progress in addressing emerging and existing environmental challenges. High on our list of priorities is the success of negotiations on climate change, preferably by the next Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Mexico.

Enhanced coordination, synergy and coherence of efforts by all stakeholders, including among the United Nations system, in addressing current environmental challenges is needed. In that context, improving international environmental governance will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of global efforts to resolve these challenges.

It must be emphasized, however, that the process of multilateral initiatives will depend on work done at the level of individual nations. As individual nations, we all have the responsibility to protect the environment in the context of sustainable development. We must all contribute to global solutions.

Finally, the global financial and economic crisis has a tremendous impact not just on our development efforts but also on efforts to tackle environmental challenges. The depth of the crisis has raised questions about the path and methods chosen to achieve economic development in the past. That has presented us with an opportunity to redesign global economic policies and strategies along the lines of green growth and a green economy. As a goal, green growth will ensure that we better integrate and mainstream ecological concerns into the very fabric of our economic decision-making process. That will ensure sustainable economic growth and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow at 10 a.m.

Statement by the Acting President

The Acting President: Before I adjourn this meeting, I wish to announce that this will be the last meeting of the General Assembly for Ms. Carmencita Dizon, generally known as Benjie, of the General Assembly Affairs Branch of the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management. Ms. Dizon has been with the United Nations for more than 30 years, during most of which she has been associated with the work of the plenary of the General Assembly. Her contribution to the smooth running of the meetings of the Assembly has been truly significant.

I would like the Assembly to give her a round of applause in appreciation. We wish her all the best.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.